

THIRD NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EXCHANGE OF PERSONS

January 28-31, 1959, Washington, D. C.

Report of Workshop # I - 4: BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

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It was the general feeling of the panel and the participants that exchange of persons in business and industry is one of the critical areas from a cold war point of view as well as for less obsessive considerations. It is here that the United States is the primary resource of the free world for the needs of developing countries as well as for the more developed countries.

Although the sheer numbers of technicians and managers from abroad are not adequately measured by official figures, there was a strong feeling on all sides that much more could be done. It was pointed out that more and more companies with foreign operations are bringing groups of their managers and technicians to the United States for special training, and that there were a thousand a month here on ICA Technical Assistance teams and projects. There is much evidence, however, that a very much greater number would come if there were opportunities for them to be placed for a time in industry. The visitors and students on organized teams and programs are reasonably well taken care of but representatives of USIA, the State Department, IIE, and International House, as well as AMA, indicated that there was very great difficulty in placing those who wanted to work independently. The American Scandinavian Foundation reported good success in having found a thousand companies who have taken trainees, and also to have received contributions to their overhead costs from 450 companies. On the other hand, the Director of Foreign Students of International General Electric reported on a survey conducted two years ago of 200 companies which had formerly taken in foreign on-the-job workers. Most of these companies reported that they had taken up the project on the basis of a personal contact but had let it lapse because of the cost and time to management which they could not justify to their Boards on profit grounds. They admitted the possibility of long-range advantages to the United States but the gruelling pressure of competition would not allow use of company resources in management time and other costs.

It was emphasized that the proper preparation and administration of such an educational experience, to be fair to the man, would be complicated and costly process for most companies. Management representatives, however, agreed that if a central clearinghouse could be established, and companies could see what they were "letting themselves in for", and could be assured that the staff of this clearinghouse would take care of many of the personal problems of the students, there might well be a much greater field of opportunity for such exchanges. The Duisberg (Germany) Gesellschaft was mentioned as a possible model for such a clearinghouse.

The Indian Steel Training Program now in operation was indicated as a good model for proceeding in this area although Dr. W. H. Turner of the U. S. Steel Foundation pointed out that there are more problems to be faced as the number of participants is stepped up, especially in language training.

Early in the discussion emphasis was placed on the necessity for making the experience a whole one for the visitors, making certain that they saw our society from the social as well as the technical side. The program of the Washington International Center and the many community centers which have been set up and whose sponsors were out in force at this conference were cited as means to this end.

Dr. Fox entered a plea for restricting trips to people at least 23 years of age and pointed to the dangers of "deculturation" involved in too long a stay. He urged also the need for more research on the whole problem of the length of stay and the ideal combination of formal study, job experience, and travel.

Rather less attention was paid to the need for U. S. students and executives to go abroad. It was agreed that there was not enough of this being stimulated and that most of the study by Americans abroad was in the academic field of humanities and social sciences and that most of these exchangees went into academic life. The question was asked as to how young men and women in the beginning years of their work experience could be encouraged to take wider cultural studies abroad. The answer seemed to be that this is a great deal to ask of a young man just beginning a job--he can hardly consider it prudent to take a year to broaden himself just as he is being measured against his contemporaries for progress in the firm.

The strongest feeling of the panel and audience was that some action needed to be taken to initiate a clearinghouse operation to stimulate job training exchanges in U. S. industry with sufficient resources to do the job right. It was suggested that some sort of tax exemption possibilities might increase the possibility of U. S. companies' supporting this effort. The most likely avenue of development was thought to be through industry groups which might work out exchanges with like industry groups in countries abroad. As an example this is now being done by the Hotel Association in cooperation with the International Hotel Association.

The visitors and students on organized teams and who were reasonably well taken care of but representatives of U.S.I.C. the U.S. Department of State and International House, as well as I.I.C. indicated that there was very little activity in placing those who wanted to work independently. The American Foundation reported good success in having a number of students who had been taken over business, and also to have received applications in their country. On the other hand, the Director of Foreign Exchange of U.S.I.C. reported on a survey conducted two years ago of U.S.I.C. which had formerly taken in foreign exchange workers. Most of these companies reported that they had taken on the basis of a personal contact but had let it lapse because of the cost and time an arrangement with them could not justify as their boards on profit grounds. They admitted the possibility of foreign exchange advantages in the United States but the prevailing pressure of competition would not allow use of company resources in management time and other costs.

It was emphasized that the proper preparation and administration of such an educational experience, to be fair to the host, would be complicated and costly. Reports for most companies, however, agreed that if a better clearinghouse could be established, and companies could see what they were "getting the answer to for", and could be assured that the staff of this clearinghouse would take care of any of the personal problems of the students, there might well be a much greater field of opportunity for such exchange. The industry (Germany) specialists was mentioned as a possible model for such a clearinghouse.

The Indian Social Training Program was indicated as a good model for something in this area although Dr. H. H. Turner of the U. S. Social Foundation pointed out that there are more problems to be faced as the number of participants is stepped up, especially in language training.